
WA 39

Ensuring strategic alignment of plans for
Putterham Golf Course with town priorities

WA Co-petitioners Leonard Wholey (TMM 11), Jennifer Goldsmith (TMM 11), Cher Duffield (TMM 10), Julie Jette (TMM 16), Wendy Friedman (TMM 5), Anthony Ishak (TMM 1)

What IS WA 39?

A resolution seeking to remove the constraints of current conditions and open the master planning process to **considerations** of **various** possible uses and redesigns of the 120 acres that make up the municipal golf course, including investigating the feasibility of a 9-hole option.

What WA 39 IS NOT

- | | |
|---|--|
| NOT a proposed solution | We are not advocating a specific alternative, only that consideration should be given to reducing the playing area in lieu of other uses, including walking and biking paths and habitat restoration |
| NOT a redesign | we have not proposed a new or specific design of any kind |
| NOT a ban on golfing | we are not asking that golfing be removed from the land |
| NOT a threat to the environment | we are not requesting further destruction or construction, and in fact would be in favor of restoring the land to its natural and more climate friendly state |
| NOT exclusionary to any populations or use | we seek for this land to be used by residents and non-residents alike and not to be closed to those not playing golf nor to other uses |

Why WA 39?

Strategic planning is a priority for TMMs and voters alike

Planning must be intentional and aligned with community needs

Planning must be creative and not constrained by current conditions

Assumptions need to be recognized as such and put to the test

History isn't destiny- we need to be open to and guided by current needs

"A random sampling of residents has been invited to take a survey, and these responses will provide statistically valid result. The results will provide information in determining community values, satisfaction levels, needs and priorities and demographics for the town's long-term planning efforts"

- Brookline Tab

Golf Course Abridged Timeline



1899-1901

The land now used as the Putterham Golf course was originally bought by the Town of Brookline for playground purposes.

1927

Despite protests from naturalists and a proliferation of local golf courses, Town Meeting appropriates \$3,000 for procuring plans for the proposed municipal golf course to be constructed on Putterham Meadows.

1933

Municipal golf course opens. \$3,500 requested by Park Commission to buy drainage pipe for course, the first of many investments and millions of dollars in drainage required to maintain this land as a golf course.



2019

Brookline Parks and Rec Open Space Survey shows substantial open space needs. Golf ranks lowest among 21 options for space use.

2022

Brookline Parks and Rec Commission designates a Golf Course Master Plan Committee which states unequivocally, *"WHAT IS DESIRED TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE COMMITTEE? THESE ACTIVITIES CAN NOT JEOPARDIZE THE ABILITY TO OFFER 18 HOLES OF GOLF."*

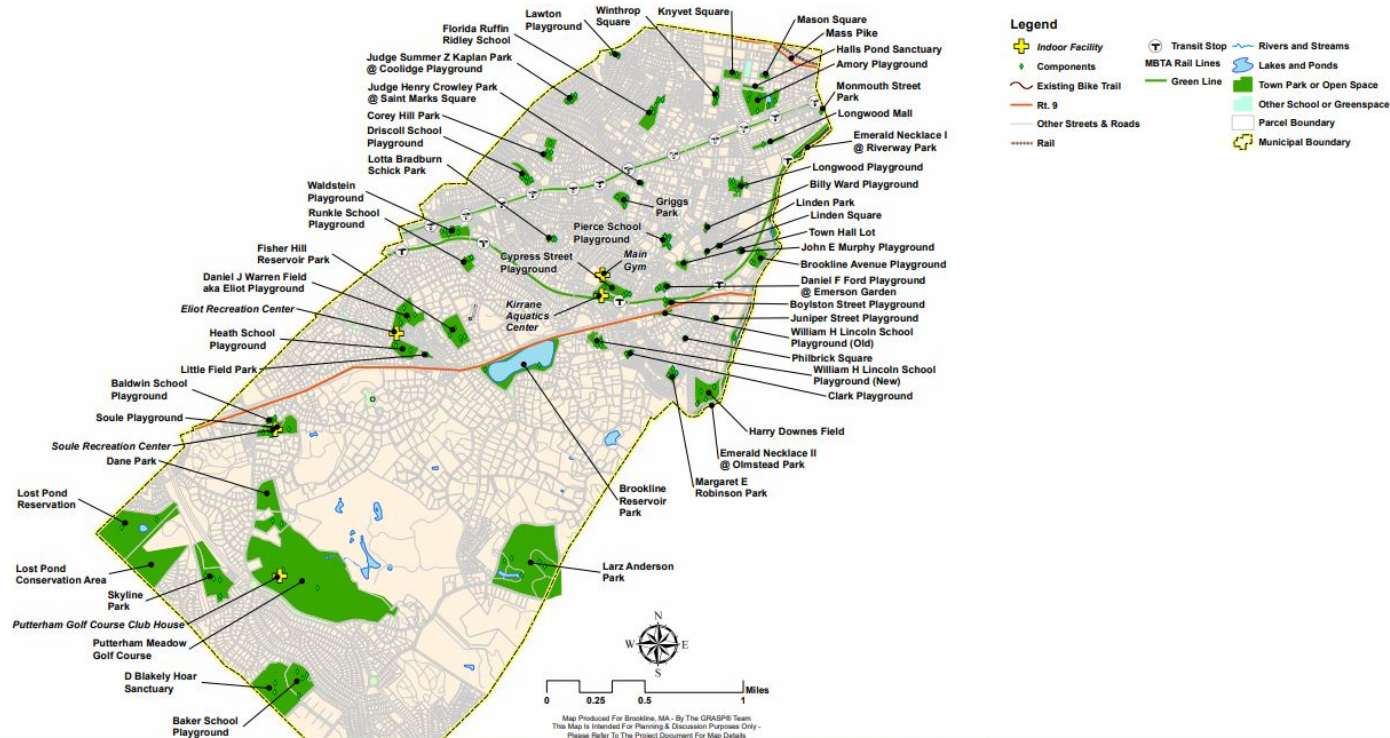
Why now?

- **36 acres are needed** to meet standard of one acre open & parks space per 100 residents.
- The **golf course is of “low importance” for a majority of community members** relative to other recreation and open space needs (2019 Parks, Rec Open Space Master Plan). These other priorities have not substantially informed the golf course master planning process.
- **Other avenues of influence have not worked** (suggestions made by petitioners at commission meetings over the last year & early requests by P & R commissioners to consider a 9-hole option were dismissed without substantive consideration.
- This is the **last opportunity to expand land use considerations** before master planning process ends.

Current Parks and Rec System

Brookline, MA

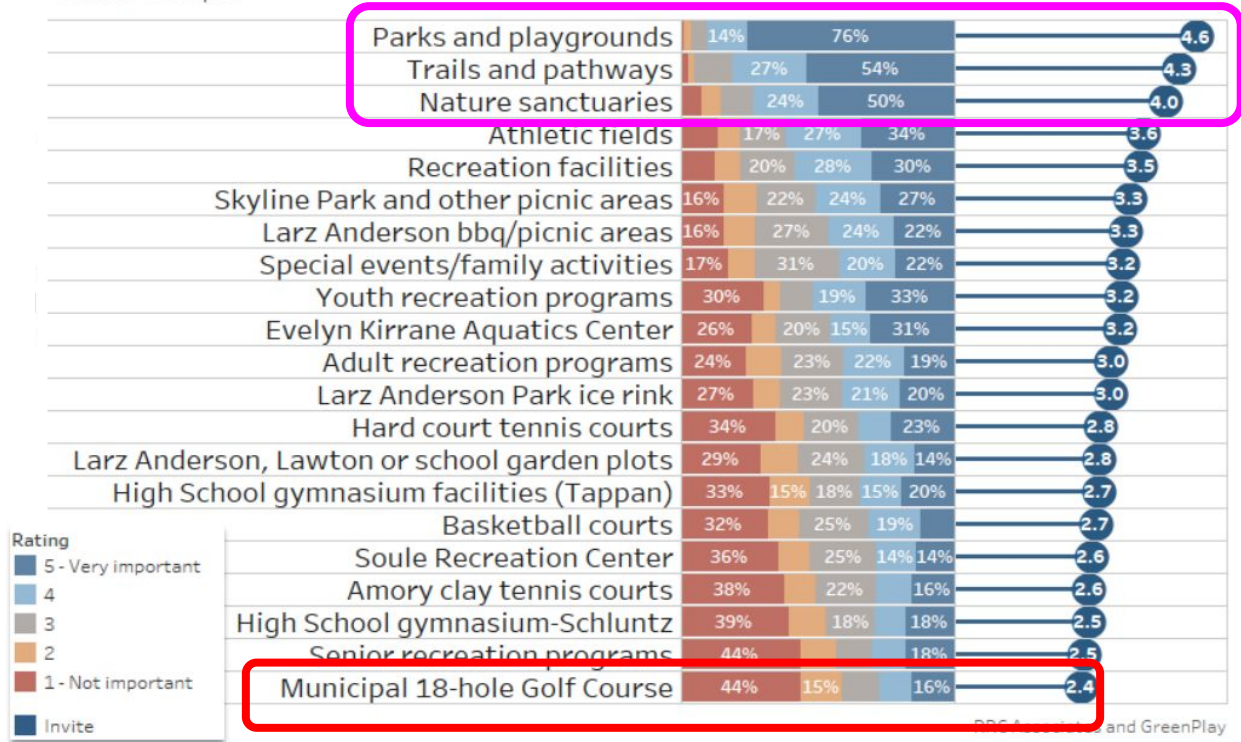
Parks and Recreation System Map



Community's top priorities at odds with current use of this land

Current Activities | Q 9: Please rate A: how important the following recreation facilities and services are to your household.

Invite Sample



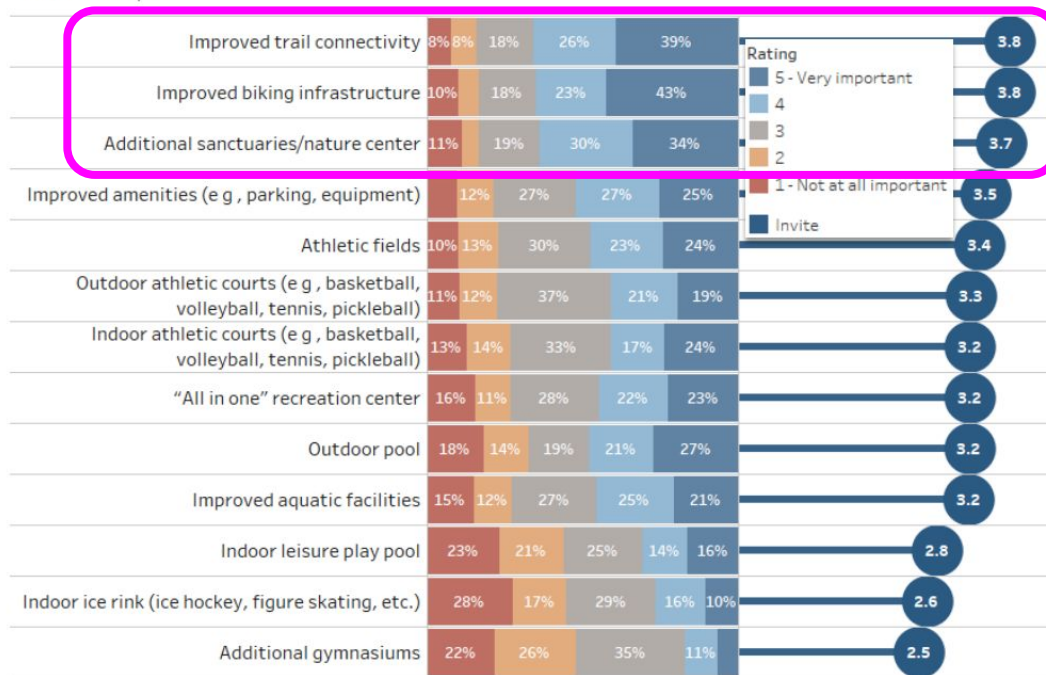
Source: 2019 Parks & Recs Open Space Master Plan survey

And what residents want Brookline to prioritize moving forward...

Biking infrastructure, which is least robust in South Brookline, hits the list at #2.

Future Facilities, Amenities, and Programs | Q 15: What are the greatest needs for facilities and athletic fields in Brookline over the next 5 to 10 years?

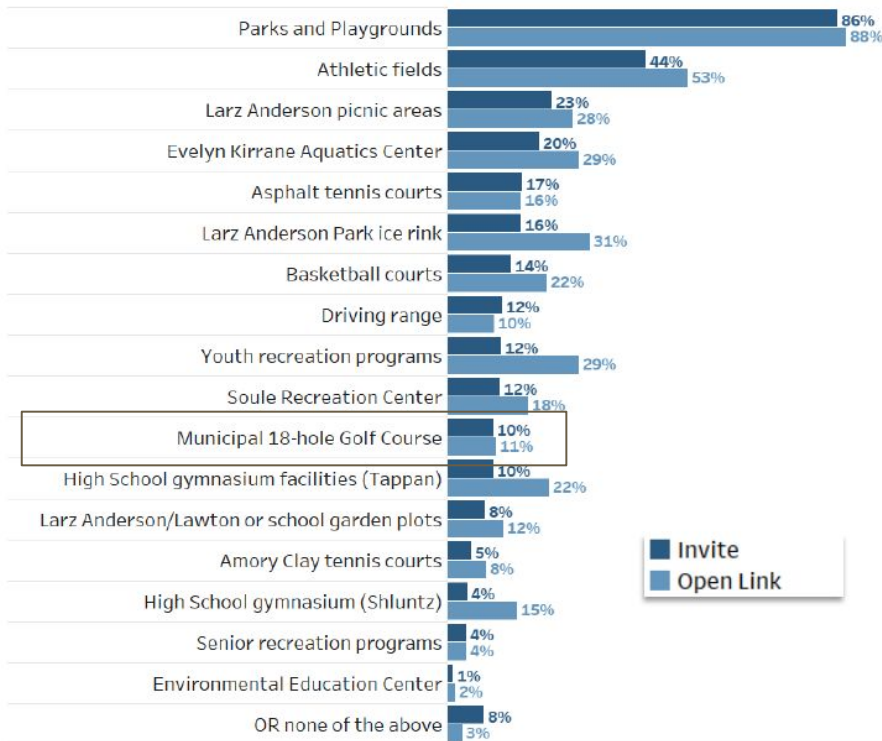
Invite Sample



Reflecting town priorities, the golf course is one of the least used town assets

- Brookline's parks, playgrounds and athletic fields serve the greatest proportion of community members.
- The 18-hole course is among the least used town recreational assets.

Current Activities | Q 4: In the past 12 months, which Brookline parks/recreation facilities or amenities have you personally used? (Check all that apply)
By Source



Source: 2019 Parks & Recs Open Space Master Plan survey

Source: RRC Associates and GreenPlay

Current state is in conflict with public needs and town climate initiatives

- Extremely limited access to the public (only regular time during golf season the grounds can be freely accessed is Mondays before noon).
- As recently as 2016, land was cleared to construct a new driving range
- In 2021, roughly 242 gallons of liquid and 1,305 lbs of dry pesticides containing dangerous and environmentally harmful chemicals were used on the golf course. In 2020 usage was 233 gallons liquid and 120 lbs dry.



But what about all the reasons not to support WA39?

- WA39 will result in an environmental disaster
 - The course is peat - the best material to combat climate change. And besides, the land can't support any other use.
 - The golf course is a bird sanctuary and any other use would destroy that habitat.
- BHS golf team would have their practices compromised.
- The town can't bare the cost of managing the land - the golf course pays for itself.

Claim: Any other use of this land will be an environmental disaster

Reality:

- The most recent analysis of golf course land was done in 1992. Findings indicate that the organic soil over clay and gravel. Unclear if and how much peat is present.
- High water levels are necessary for peat to act as a carbon sequester, something that could be achieved if more of the land were converted back to natural habitat space and drainage was not encouraged.
- The master plan prioritizes play quality over sustainability, stating that **“Functionality is the Top Priority. The MP should focus on Improvements that PROMOTE CONSISTENTLY GOOD PLAYING CONDITIONS THROUGHOUT THE GOLF SEASON”** (caps in original), and stating that **“Poor drainage is the most negative feature of the existing course.”**

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Reality: Pesticide use on course is environmental unsound

"For the Brookline Golf Course, integrated pest management specifically involves cooperative regular monitoring of plant material and pest levels, and prohibiting toxic pesticides, including glyphosate and 2,4-D, unless as a last resort in emergency situations only when other means of control are ineffective, or economically unfeasible." " - 2022 Agg Plan.pdf"

EPA approved label for Daconil Action, the pesticide with the largest use in 2021 (82 of the 242 total liquid gallons applied):

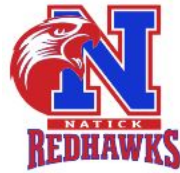
Environmental Hazards: This product is **toxic to aquatic invertebrates, fish and wildlife**. DO NOT apply directly to water, to areas where surface water is present or to intertidal areas below the mean high water mark. **Drift and runoff may be hazardous to aquatic organisms in neighboring areas**. DO NOT contaminate water when disposing of equipment wash water or rinsate. Chlorothalonil, one of the active ingredients in Daconil Action, is known to leach through soil into groundwater under certain conditions as a result of label use. Use of this product in areas where soils are permeable, particularly where the water table is shallow, may result in groundwater contamination. Daconil Action can contaminate surface water through spray drift. **Under some conditions, it may have a high potential for runoff into surface water for several days to weeks after application. These include poorly draining or wet soils with readily visible slopes toward adjacent surface waters**, frequently flooded areas, areas over-laying extremely shallow groundwater, areas with infield canals or ditches that drain to surface water, areas not separated from adjacent surface waters with vegetated filter strips, and areas over-laying tile drainage systems that drain to surface water.

Claim: BHS golf team would have their practices compromised

Reality:

High School teams all across the region hold practices and meets at 9-hole courses.

There's no data suggesting Brookline cannot do the same.

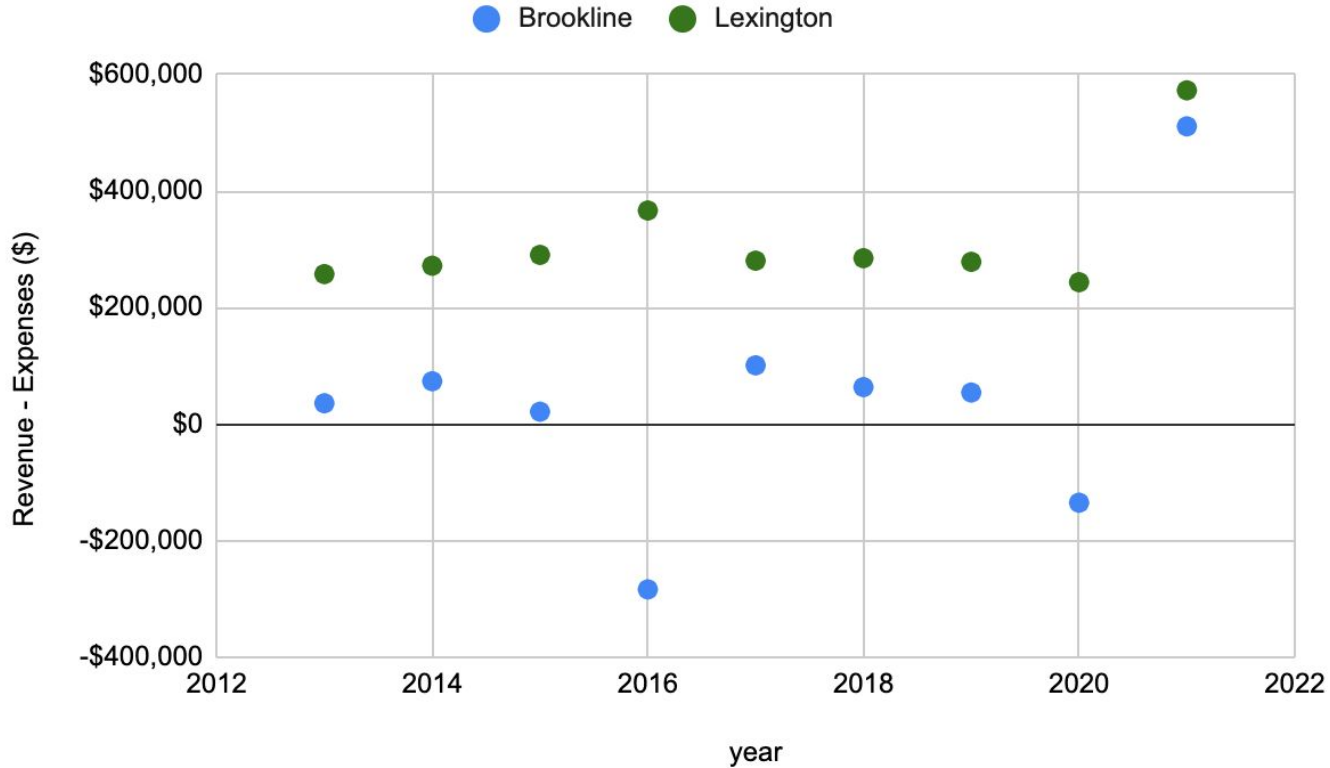


NATICK HIGH SCHOOL

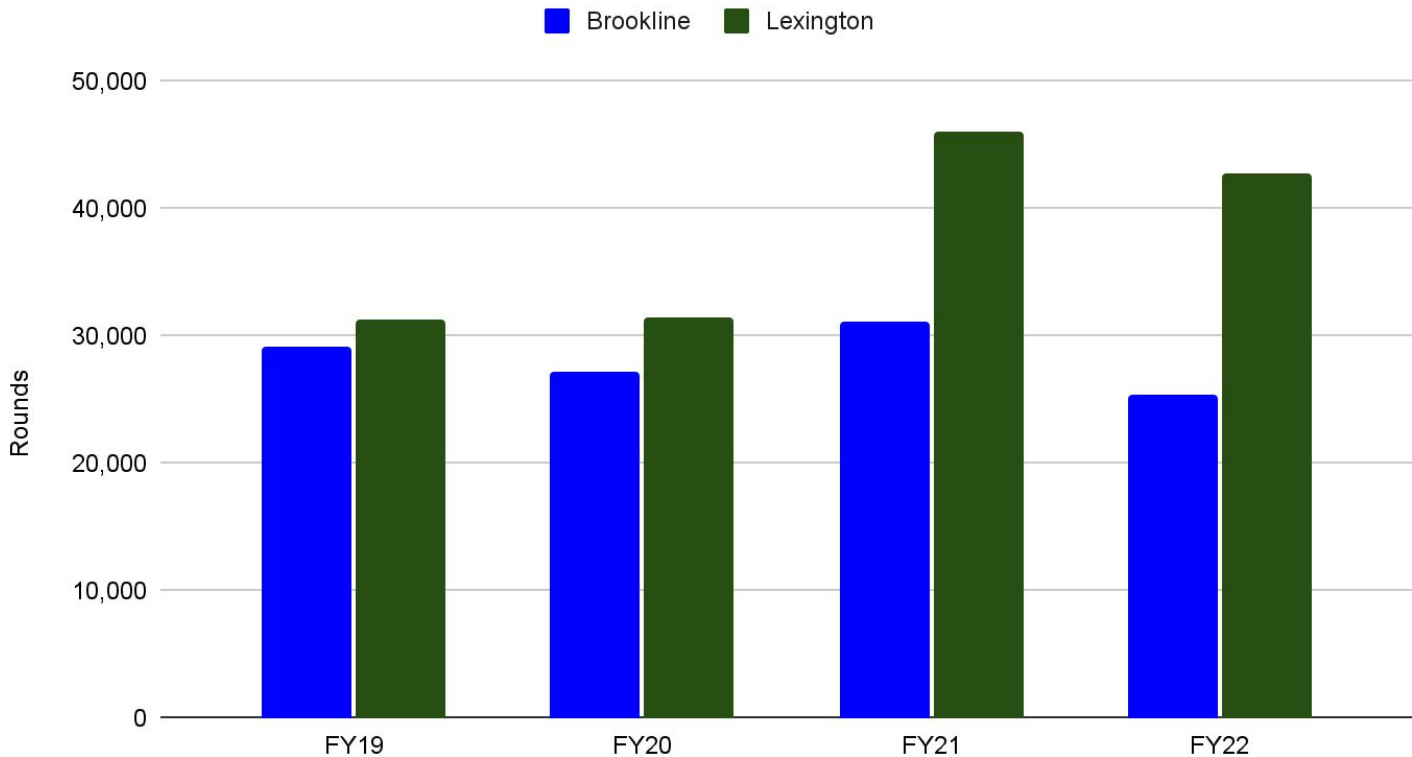


Claim: The GEF is self-sustaining and only the current 18-hole course is financially feasible

Reality: Nearby 9-hole golf course profits exceed Brookline's 18-hole revenue



Reality: More rounds played at Lexington's 9 hole golf course than Brookline's 18-hole golf course



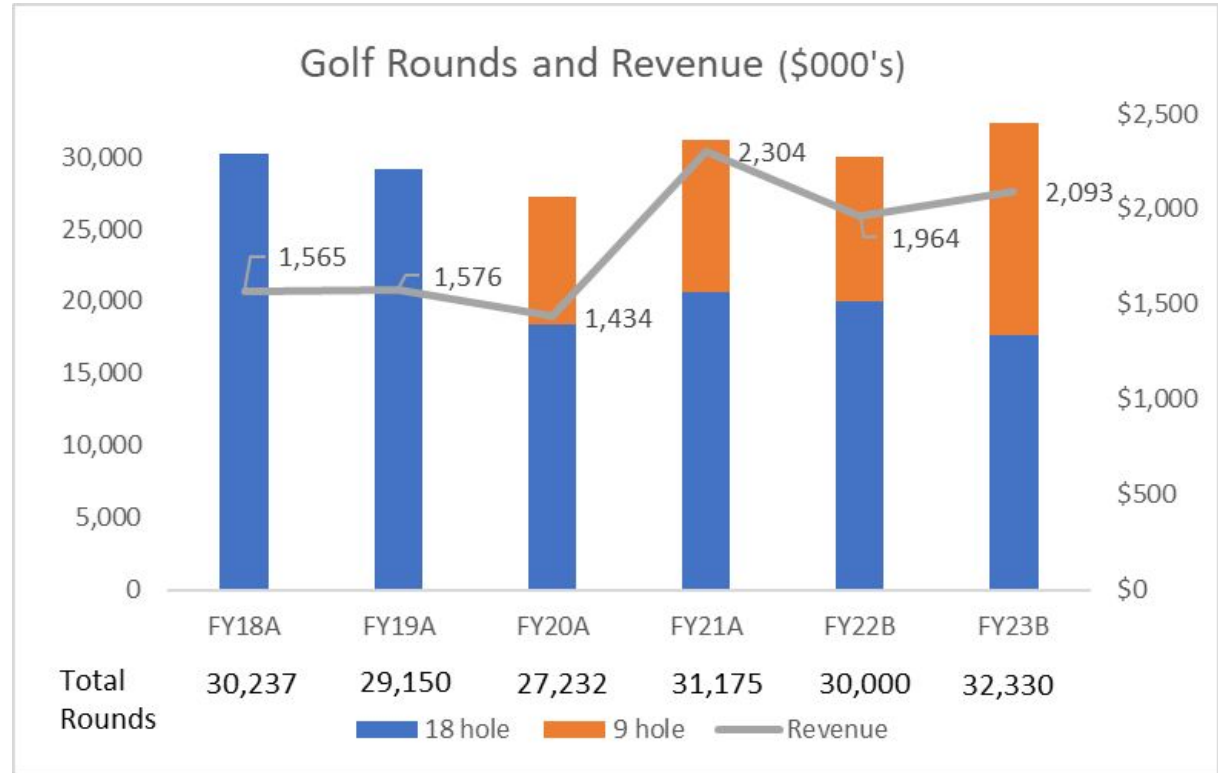
Reality: Available data suggest that 18-hole usage at the golf course is on the decline, while 9-hole plays are increasing and driving revenue growth

Revenue is budgeted to grow from \$1.6M in FY18 to \$2.1M in FY23, a 34% increase.

Total rounds 7% from FY18 to FY23.

9-hole v. 18 hole tracking begins in FY20.

Growth in 9-hole from FY20 - FY23 is **67%**, driving overall revenue growth, while 18-hole declines by 4%.



The time is right and the ask is simple

1. Broaden the scope of the Golf Course Landscape Master Plan to consider what other uses are feasible within the 120 acres, taking into account the wants expressed in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space 2019 Strategic Master Plan Survey.
2. Include at least one option with a 9 hole golf course, in addition to additional possible uses as a perimeter path, wetland restoration, Miyawaki forest, tree nursery, community gardens, a fenced in dog park, and/or other recreational needs identified and expressed by the Parks and Recreation Commission.
3. Use a portion of either the \$475K Master Plan funds or the Golf Course Enterprise Fund year-end unreserved fund balance to pay for the updated Plan.

Brookline has opportunity to innovate or to stagnate

A new master plan could help transform Boston Common into a 'better version' of itself

City officials are hoping to revamp the country's oldest public park over the next decade.

By [Spencer Buell](#) Globe Staff, Updated October 12, 2022, 12:01 a.m.



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“This really is a park for the entire city, not just a neighborhood park,” said Liz Vizza, president of the Friends of the Public Garden, a nonprofit that collaborated with the Boston Parks and Recreation Department to craft the Boston Common Master Plan. “Which is why we need it to be the best version, the most resilient version, of itself in order for it to play this role into the future, and be the highest quality it can be.”